

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
SCHOOL OF NURSING**

**ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE
GRADUATE PROGRAM**

TITLE OF POLICY: **DISSERTATION DEVELOPMENT AND COMPLETION**

ORINGINAL DATE: SEPTEMBER 1992

LAST REVIEWED/REVISED: FEBRUARY 2003

POLICY: "The doctoral dissertation is the final and most important component of the series of academic experiences which culminate in the awarding of the Ph.D. degree. Three major functions are fulfilled by the dissertation experience: (1) It is a work of original research or scholarship which makes a contribution to existing knowledge; (2) It is an educational experience which demonstrates the candidate's mastery of research methods and tools of the specialized field; and (3) It demonstrates the student's ability to address a major intellectual problem and arrive at a successful conclusion."¹

Characteristics that a dissertation should demonstrate are: the establishment of a historical context for the presentation of an innovative and creative approach to the problem analysis and solution; a clear understanding of the problem area as revealed by analysis and synthesis of a broad literature base; a well defined research design; clarity in composition and careful documentation; results of sufficient merit to be published in refereed journals or to form the basis of a book or monograph; sufficient detail so that other scholars can build on it in subsequent work."²

If the dissertation is the result of a collaborative research effort, the project should be structured in such a way that the student's dissertation results from one clearly identified piece of work in which the student has supplied the unquestionably major effort. The contributions of the student and the other collaborators must be clearly identified.

The student may elect to write the dissertation using the traditional format or the manuscript format. The student and the dissertation committee must agree that the manuscript format is appropriate. The manuscript format facilitates the publication of the dissertation without extensive reformatting.

Published articles or papers that are ready for publication authored by the student and based on research conducted for the dissertation study may be included in the dissertation. In any case, the published work must be logically connected and integrated into the dissertation in a coherent manner, and sufficient detail must be presented to satisfy the characteristics of a dissertation. The student should be the sole or primary author of the published work. If the published articles were co-authored, the

¹Requirements for the Ph.D. A Policy Statement. (1979). Washington, DC: The Council of Graduate Schools in the United States. (pp.7-8).

² Regulations Governing Graduate Study at the University of Pittsburgh. (Nov. 1995). (p. 39)

contribution of the student must be clearly delineated in the introduction so the committee can ascertain that the student's own work satisfies the requirements of a dissertation.”³

Requirements for admission to candidacy are in accordance with those established by the University Council on Graduate Study. To qualify for admission to candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the student must have:

- × satisfactorily completed the preliminary examination
- × completed formal course work with a minimum quality point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale
- × passed the comprehensive examination
- × received approval of the research proposal from the dissertation committee selected for this purpose

The form and style of the dissertation must be in accord with the specifications outlined in the Style and Form Manual for Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Preparation at the University of Pittsburgh and the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). If the content of the APA Manual differs from the University document, the latter shall take precedence.

PROCEDURE:

1. The student selects a qualified nursing faculty member with expertise in the area of research focus to guide the research and chair the dissertation committee.
2. During the research proposal development stage the student may seek consultation from any member of the University faculty who he/she believes can be of help.
3. After the student and dissertation chair have agreed on a topic and a general method to approach the proposed study, the student seeks approval of the dissertation focus from Ph.D. Council (see Policy #234).
4. In consultation with the committee chair, the student selects a minimum of three faculty members in addition to the committee chair to serve as dissertation committee members. The majority of the committee, including the major advisor, must be full or adjunct members of the Graduate Faculty of the University of Pittsburgh.
5. The committee chair submits the names of the committee member nominees to the Doctoral Program Coordinator and the Dean for approval; when approval has been obtained the student contacts the nominees and requests them to serve on the committee.
6. If the student desires to use the manuscript format, the committee and student need to review the requirements and establish the approach for writing the specific dissertation. Refer to “Guidelines for use of a Manuscript Format for Dissertation”(attached).

³ Regulations Governing Graduate Study at the University of Pittsburgh. (Nov. 1995) (p. 40)

7. As the student proceeds with the research he/she has the privilege and responsibility to seek guidance from the committee members. The committee is responsible for:
 - a. advising the student through the research process
 - b. ensuring high quality research
 - c. ensuring that the dissertation meets acceptable standards. Committee members may request revision of any part of the dissertation at any stage.
 - d. meeting with the doctoral student/candidate at least annually from the time the committee is formed.
8. The committee chair informs the student when he/she is satisfied that the research proposal is ready for overview consideration by the committee.
9. The student is responsible for contacting committee members for feasible dates for the overview meeting and conveying the information to the committee chair who finalizes the date and time and arranges for notification of committee members.
10. The student must submit a copy of the dissertation proposal to each member of the committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date for the overview meeting.
11. At the overview meeting committee members have the opportunity and responsibility to obtain clarification as needed and recommend changes in the proposal as indicated.
12. At the conclusion of the overview meeting the committee chair is responsible for informing the student of the decision and recommendations of the committee, and for completing the "Record of Overview for Dissertation" and ensuring that it is signed by all committee members. The original form is forwarded to Student Services for filing in the student's record. A copy of the form is forwarded to the student's academic advisor.

The doctoral committee must unanimously approve the dissertation topic and the research plan before the student may be admitted to candidacy for the doctoral degree.
13. The committee chair recommends to the Dean that the student be admitted to candidacy. Students are informed of admission to candidacy by written notification from the Dean.
14. If the dissertation proposal is approved and does not require human subjects clearance, the student can proceed with the research. If the proposed study involves use of human subjects,

approval from the appropriate University IRB and the agency where the data will be gathered must be obtained prior to initiation of the study. The student obtains the guidelines from the appropriate IRB and the agency and prepares and submits a proposal to them after obtaining the approval of the committee chair.

15. As the student proceeds with the research he/she is responsible for consulting with the chair and committee members. After completion of the research the student will submit a draft of the dissertation to the chair for review and approval.
16. When, in the opinion of the chair, the dissertation is ready for examination by the committee the student is responsible for contacting the committee members for feasible dates for the oral defense, and conveying this information to the chair. The chair finalizes the date and arranges for notification of committee members.
17. The student must submit a copy of the dissertation to each member of the committee at least two weeks prior to the scheduled oral defense meeting.
18. The date, time, and place of the oral defense is published in the University Times well in advance of the scheduled date. Any member of the Graduate Faculty of the University may attend and participate in the oral examination.
19. During the oral defense meeting, any member of the dissertation committee can request that the student revise any portion of the dissertation that does not meet with his/her approval.
20. If revisions are required, committee members may (a) request to again review the dissertation before signing the "Record of Defense for Dissertation" or (b) may sign the form and defer responsibility for the revisions to the committee chair. In either event, the dissertation committee chair has the responsibility for ensuring that the dissertation is in acceptable final form and that all signatures of committee members have been obtained on both the Record of Defense for Dissertation form and the Committee Signature Form before the student submits the dissertation to Student Services.
21. If the decision of the committee on passing the candidate is not unanimous, the case is referred to the Dean for resolution.
22. Upon completion of the dissertation the student is responsible for submitting to Student Services:
 - a. one copy of the dissertation
 - b. two additional copies of the title page

- c. four copies of the 350 word abstract (all four copies are to be initialed in the upper right hand corner by the dissertation chair)
 - d. binding-microfilm fees receipt
 - e. University Microfilm International agreement for publication of the dissertation on microfilm and publication of the abstract in Dissertation Abstracts International.
 - f. completed "Survey of Earned Doctorate" form
23. The student is responsible for submitting a copy of the dissertation to the Doctoral Program Coordinator.
24. The committee chair is responsible for completing and forwarding the following to Student Services:
- a. Record of Defense for Dissertation
 - b. Committee Signature Form
 - c. Committee Membership Form
 - d. Change of Status form (for final oral defense)

Approved by Graduate Faculty Organization: 12/83
Reviewed 91-92, 99-00
Revisions Approved by Faculty 5/92, 3/00
Reviewed 9/01, 1/03
Revisions Approved by Faculty 10/01, 2/03